



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m. by Mayor Streeter.

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri, Phase II School Design Committee Chairman John Scott and committee members, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Office Assistant Lori Watrous.

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by John Scott.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

None.

IV. RECEIPT OF CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Kevin Trejo, 536-L Shennecossett Road, urged the Council not to accept the Phase II School Design Committee recommendation as proposed. He stated that the 50 acres of land at the King property would accommodate the school and up to five athletic fields without crowding, and noted that \$5 million was spent during Phase I to get the property ready for the next phase. In addition, some roads near Claude Chester have flooding problems, the Fort Hill neighborhood continues to struggle with security issues, and there are traffic concerns. If the Board of Education chooses to close Claude Chester it could become a community center and Fitch Middle School could be converted into municipal offices to centralize Town departments.

John Scott, 674 Cow Hill Road, Mystic, Chairman of the Phase II School Design Committee, encouraged Councilors to approve both resolutions concerning Phase II. The Phase II School Design Committee was not unanimous in its choice for the location of the new middle school, but it took a lot of time and effort to arrive at its recommendation. He would like to see this project move forward to allow the Town to take advantage of what could be the cheapest construction prices in a decade. On another note, Mr. Scott stated that the Burnett's Corners property has continued to get worse, as there are boards open in the back of the building that would allow anyone or anything to get into the basement. The promises that were made to the Town to do work on the property have not been kept and in its present state the building is a nuisance and an eyesore. Mr. Scott believes that the building needs to be torn down.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

The Town Manager noted that both the Zoning Enforcement Officer and the Building Official recently sent notices to the owner of Burnett's Corners. If the building is not secured, the Town will take the necessary steps to have it taken down. There has been no response from the owner at this time.

Council Monteiro stated that at the very least the building needs to be secured so that children

cannot get inside and get hurt.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2010-0248 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of November 16, 2010 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Administrative Items

Mayor Streeter thanked all who gave donations and highlighted gifts from Liberty Bank/Groton Rotary/Groton Lions for \$6,314.14 and from Liberty Bank/Mystic Rotary for \$613.40. Both gifts went to the Social Services Discretionary Fund.

2010-0237 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING SPECIAL TRUST FUND CONTRIBUTIONS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Estate of Grace Eileen Crowley - \$270.00 - Library Discretionary
Robert Ashworth - \$75.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Vera Cafaro - \$30.00 - Social Services Discretionary
George Marshall - \$75.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Albert and Janiss Rudolph - \$75.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Voodoo Grill - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Various Donations - \$903.94 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
City of Groton - \$306.10 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
Benedict Owen - \$85.00 - Animal Shelter Miscellaneous
Benjamin Dinovelli - \$550.00 - Animal Shelter Miscellaneous
Susan Austin in memory of Henry Coatsworth - \$100.00 - Parks and Recreation Revolving
John Sutherland - \$250.00 - Arts Cafe Miscellaneous
Circle of Friends - \$250.00 - Library Discretionary
Various Donations - \$270.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program (GAP)
Elaine Adams - \$200.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Joan Butler - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Peter and Elizabeth Campbell - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Connecticut Emblem Club - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Connecticut Emblem Club - \$40.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Paul and Elizabeth Duarte - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Carla Henschel - \$75.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Liberty Bank/Groton Rotary/Groton Lions - \$6,314.14 - Social Services Discretionary
Liberty Bank/Mystic Rotary - \$613.40 - Social Services Discretionary
George Marshall - \$200.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Richard and Karen Neff - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Old Mystic Fire District - \$535.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Henry and Pamela Olexy - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Sacred Heart Church - \$20.00 - Social Services Discretionary
St. Mary's Church - \$10.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Lee Treadway - \$20.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Lee Vincent - \$50.00 - Social Services Discretionary

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

c. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2010-0238 Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community - Extension

- 2010-0240** **Historic District Commission Issues**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
- 2010-0243** **Town Council Appointments to Mystic and Noank Library Study Committee**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.
- 2010-0245** **Resolution Accepting Phase II School Design Committee Recommendation**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
- 2010-0246** **Authorization to Prepare Bond Ordinance for Phase II School Project**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
- 2010-0247** **DJ Dunn Associates Town Operations Review**
This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Johnson, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.
The motion carried unanimously

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Councilor O'Beirne reminded citizens that December 7, 2010, is the 69th Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Councilor Flax attended the Noank School Reuse Task Force meeting.

Councilor Kolnaski attended the Groton Heights School Reuse Task Force meeting and received calls regarding the location recommended by the Phase II School Design Committee.

Councilor Sheets attended a presentation by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) to the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community, whose workshops have been a pilot for organizations throughout New England and Washington D.C.

Councilor Watson stated that November 7, 2010, marks his 20th Anniversary on the Council.

Councilor Johnson attended an Economic Development Commission meeting.

Mayor Streeter received an email regarding the Town and City flags, and he also received emails regarding the Town becoming a cable access provider. He, along with Councilor Watson, attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for "Teenscape", the newly renovated teen area at the Groton Public Library. Mayor Streeter, along with Councilor Monteiro, met with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Historic District Commission. He also attended a Veterans Day Memorial Service, the Indian and Colonial Research Center annual meeting, a meeting regarding drainage on Judson Avenue, a special Council of Governments meeting, and the ribbon-cutting for the new Community Hearing Center on Long Hill Road. Mayor Streeter and City Deputy Mayor Marian Galbraith taped a program regarding the revitalization project on Thames Street which will begin to air on December 10, 2010.

b. Clerk of the Representative Town Meeting

The next regular meeting of the RTM will be on December 8, 2010.

c. Clerk of the Council

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher attended a class on Vital Records through the Certified Municipal

Clerk Institute School for Connecticut Town Clerks on December 3, 2010. She reminded citizens that there are many vacancies on boards and commissions, and anyone interested should contact the Town Clerk's office or visit the Town website for a complete listing.

d. Town Manager

The Town Manager noted that the recent "Click it or Ticket" campaign which ran November 8-21, 2010, was very successful and the Town employee United Way campaign raised a little over \$23,000. Mr. Oefinger stated that Noank Group Homes and Support Services will have an open-house for its new administrative offices on December 9, 2010. There will be a holiday open-house at the Avery-Copp Museum on December 12, 2010, and a SWOT Workshop - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats regarding the Groton-New London Airport on December 14, 2010. The request to the State Department of Public Works regarding trails on the land at the Mystic Education Center will be referred to the Department of Environmental Protection, as the land transferred ownership in November 2010.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman Peruzzotti

No meeting, no report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Johnson

No meeting, no report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting, no report.

d. Environment/Energy - Chairman Sheets

No meeting, no report.

e. Finance - Chairman O'Beirne

No meeting, no report.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman Flax

No meeting, no report.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Monteiro

No meeting, no report.

h. Public Works/Recreation - Chairman Watson

No meeting, no report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Streeter

The resolutions on tonight's agenda are a result of recent Committee of the Whole meetings.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2010-0238 Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community - Extension

RESOLUTION EXTENDING THE TASK FORCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, the Town Council established the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community for a period of two years and appointed members to the Task Force with term expiration dates of December 2, 2010, and

WHEREAS, the Task Force is working to complete its final report and anticipates submitting the report to the Town Council in the near future, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community and the term expiration dates of its members are extended for a period of three months to March 2, 2011.

A motion was made by Councilor Monteiro, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0243

Town Council Appointments to Mystic and Noank Library Study Committee

RESOLUTION MAKING APPOINTMENTS TO THE MYSTIC AND NOANK LIBRARY STUDY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED, that the following individuals are appointed by the Town Council to the Mystic and Noank Library Study Committee:

Town Council - Mick O'Beirne

RTM - Kevin Power and Dana Semeraro

Citizen-at-Large - James Loughlin

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2010-0245

Resolution Accepting Phase II School Design Committee Recommendation

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE PHASE II SCHOOL DESIGN COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS, the Phase II School Design Committee was established by the Town Council in November 2006 to develop Phase II of a comprehensive school improvement program, and

WHEREAS, the efforts of the Phase II Committee resulted in the adoption of the March 11, 2010 "Town of Groton Master Planning Study Phase II - Final Report" prepared by JCJ Architecture, and

WHEREAS, the Phase II Committee further refined its recommendations after input from a Board of Education hired consultant and a traffic study of two potential sites for construction of a middle school, and

WHEREAS, the Phase II Committee presented its final recommendations to the Town Council on November 23, 2010, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town Council accepts the recommendations of the Phase II School Design Committee as outlined in a memorandum from Committee Chairman John Scott dated November 18, 2010.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor O'Beirne stated that he cannot support this resolution for many reasons. He remarked that due to the fact that it is followed by a resolution to prepare a bond ordinance, passage could be construed as approval of the Phase II School Design Committee's recommendations. Councilor O'Beirne noted that many of the details of the proposal, including funding details, were only received the previous day and a drawing was distributed just prior to tonight's meeting. He is in agreement with early childhood learning, but is concerned that there will be over 600 students in each of these proposed facilities. Councilor O'Beirne is also opposed to the proposed location of the middle school and advance funding of design work prior to State approval or a

referendum.

Mayor Streeter is in favor of the proposed Pre-K thru Grade 1 facilities, but opposed to the location of the proposed middle school. He stated that the King property is 23 acres and would have more room for fields and potential expansion. Mayor Streeter stated that the proposal continues to change and evolve, one change being the inclusion of a pool which would cost an additional \$5-7 million. He feels that the process needs to slow down so that a plan can be brought to the voters that does not change every two weeks. Mayor Streeter will vote against this resolution due to the location of the middle school.

Councilor Peruzzotti stated that Phase I didn't pass the first time around, but was revised and brought back to voters. She thinks that the process should be taken one step at a time to ensure that the right decisions are made, and believes that the report should be accepted.

Councilor Flax is concerned that the committee changed its thoughts on the location after Superintendent Kadri was hired. He realizes that Phase II will be costly and will affect the tax rate and would like to know how it will effect the quality of education in Groton. Councilor Flax will support the resolution to move it forward, but still has questions that need to be answered.

Councilor Johnson thinks that the voters should decide whether they agree with the recommendations or not. He agrees with the choice of the Claude Chester property, but acknowledges that the King property would work just as well. Before the May referendum, he would like to know how Phase II will make the Town's educational system better. Councilor Johnson believes this item should move forward.

Councilor Watson stated that he will support the final report. He believes that a pool should be added to the project for quality of life, physical education, and a positive cash flow for the Town. He noted that if the final proposal that goes to referendum does not contain a pool he will vote against it at that time.

Councilor Monteiro has serious concerns regarding the Claude Chester location, believing that the middle school should be located on the King property. During Phase I an infrastructure and road were constructed on the King property to make it easier for the rest of the phases to be completed. She noted that when I-95 closes, the intersection of Route 1 and Route 117 is a nightmare and that traffic cannot get through the end of Route 117 when there is excessive rain. While Councilor Monteiro is in favor of the concept of Pre-K, she is concerned about whether the two schools will be large enough to accommodate over 600 students each. Councilor Monteiro noted that the proposal is constantly changing and she will be voting against this resolution as she would like more information.

Councilor Sheets feels that the Council should have been engaged in details much earlier. She stated that part of the justification for Phase I was based on the King property and abandoning it will jeopardize community support. Councilor Sheets noted that it took three referendum votes for Phase I to pass, and believes that Phase II will be defeated if the location for the middle school is not the King property. She will accept the recommendations but cannot support the bonding ordinance.

Councilor Kolnaski is on the Phase II School Design Committee and voted against the location of the middle school, feeling that it should be located on the King property. Both Thames Street Revitalization and Phase II School Design may be voted on in May and she is concerned that citizens will choose one or the other, and that neither will pass. Councilor Kolnaski stated that it is too much to bring to the public at the same time.

Councilor Flax stated that perhaps the committee should have been given more direction when

appointed to avoid wasting time and questions about its choice of location.

Councilor Monteiro stated that the natural progression for the project would involve the King property, and she never considered that the location would change. She stated that it has only been within the last six months that the Claude Chester property has been discussed. Furthermore, Councilor Monteiro continues to hear from citizens who are concerned that the King property isn't going to be used.

Phase II School Design Committee Chairman Scott stated that two locations were previously presented to the Council, and the committee was told to make the decision as to which location should be used. He suggested that if the resolution is not going to pass because of the choice of the site, the location should be amended to specify the King property.

MOTION TO AMEND the last paragraph to read: "RESOLVED, that the Town Council accepts the recommendations of the Phase II School Design Committee as outlined in a memorandum from committee Chairman John Scott dated November 18, 2010 with the exception of the location of the new middle school on the Claude Chester property, and be it further RESOLVED that the Town Council prefers construction of the new middle school on the King Property." was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski.

Councilor Johnson wonders why the committee was appointed if the location was known all along. He feels that the Claude Chester property is the best location and that voters should make the decision.

Councilor O'Beirne would like a complete package to accept or reject and feels that if the Council does not approve the recommendations, the committee should come back with a new package. He has more objections than the site of the middle school, and does not want design to begin before approval from the State. He also opposes early learning centers with over 600 students in them. He would like to see a new package.

Councilor Watson recognized Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri.

Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri stated that the process that the committee has followed is the process defined by the Council. He noted that construction costs are low right now and time is money. Mr. Kadri remarked that the Claude Chester site is a more viable site than the King property. He stated that the cost of constructing additional early childhood centers to decrease the student body population in each one would "make your head spin". Superintendent Kadri believes that the proposal is the most optimal solution for the money. He feels that the committee has done its best.

VOTE on Motion to Amend failed 2 In Favor, 7 Opposed (In Favor: Councilors Sheets and Kolnaski).

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 5 - Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Peruzzotti and Councilor Watson

Opposed: 4 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr. and Councilor Sheets

2010-0246

Authorization to Prepare Bond Ordinance for Phase II School Project

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PREPARATION OF BOND ORDINANCE AND OTHER RESOLUTIONS FOR PHASE II SCHOOL PROJECT

WHEREAS, the Town Council has accepted the recommendations of the Phase II School Design Committee for a Phase II School Project, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council considers it appropriate to present the Phase II School Project to

the Town's voters in a bond referendum, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town staff and the Town bond attorney are authorized to prepare a bond ordinance to be introduced by the Town Council.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Flax, that this matter be Adopted.

Councilor Monteiro stated that since the majority of the Council voted to accept the report, she will vote in favor of this resolution.

Councilor O'Beirne stated that despite the fact that a majority of the Council chose to accept the report, he will not vote for this resolution. The estimated cost is approximately \$133 million and that would mean that Groton taxpayers would pay at least \$66 million. With huge deficits in the State budget, reimbursement for school construction may not be at the levels they were in the past and Groton could end up with the whole cost, even without additional funding for a swimming pool. Councilor O'Beirne will not vote for this resolution.

Mayor Streeter will vote in favor of this resolution to allow voters to determine whether they want to fund \$133 million. He agrees with Councilor O'Beirne that we are working on the assumption that the State will reimburse \$66 million, but taxpayers may have to pay for the entire project.

Councilor Sheets will not support this resolution. She feels that voters count on the Council to exercise judgement and does not want to go through multiple referenda to get Phase II to pass. Councilor Sheets stated that the decision to use the King property was made four years ago and no other option should have been considered.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that a variety of sites were looked at and he did not feel that the only option for the middle school was the King property. He will ask the Bond Attorney to render an opinion on whether the Town can stop the project if it does not receive a reasonable reimbursement rate from the State.

Councilor O'Beirne noted that if a swimming pool is recommended as part of the project, a separate referendum question will need to be drafted.

Councilor Watson stated that the proposed middle school will be a 2-year middle school for 7th and 8th grade verses the current 3-year middle school. He stated that if a swimming pool is not part of the project, he will not support the proposal.

The Town Manager stated that if the Council desires a second question a separate resolution will be prepared to ask voters whether they support the construction of a swimming pool for \$5.9-\$7.9 million (depending on the size of the pool if the Phase II question is approved).

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro and Councilor Peruzzotti

Opposed: 3 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

2010-0247

DJ Dunn Associates Town Operations Review

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER TO ENGAGE THE SERVICES OF DJ DUNN ASSOCIATES MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

WHEREAS, the Town Manager has expressed a desire to engage the services of an outside management consultant to assist in a review of Town operations including building maintenance, grounds maintenance, fleet and equipment maintenance, golf course operations, and the Town Manager's office/Administrative Services, and

WHEREAS, David J. Dunn from DJ Dunn Associates is familiar with Town operations as a result

of his work on upgrading of the non-union pay plan and job descriptions in 2007, and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dunn has submitted a proposed scope of services and project fee in the amount of \$15,000, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that \$15,000 in funding is authorized to engage DJ Dunn Associates and that the funds be expended from encumbered funds previously appropriated under the function Executive Management 1010.

A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Streeter reminded Councilors that the Town Manager's evaluation will be discussed at the next Committee of the Whole meeting.

Due to Councilors' availability, the Committee of the Whole Meeting scheduled for December 28, 2010, will be cancelled.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:58 p.m. was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Monteiro and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the Council*

Lori Watrous, Office Assistant